

Testimony of

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Before the

Education Committee

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Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

One of the MOST crucial factors in learning is having a safe environment. In order to achieve that, we need to be able to know that our buildings are safe; free from not only external but internal threats. Bullying, harassment and the threatening behaviors that have been minimized by administrators needs to be treated as viable and be treated with definitive action. Many situations have been given a slap on the wrist consequence, if any at all, in order to keep the peace with a loud parent at the detriment of the safety of a whole class, sometimes a whole school. Parents don't see the day to day and don't have all the students in mind when they are advocating for their child to stay even when they've done harm to others. We need to provide children living examples of why threatening behavior is not okay- no matter who you are. Aside from whole school safety, teachers as a community have sacrificed so much to maintain high standards of academic success in their buildings. Throughout the pandemic, teachers had to make dramatic shifts in learning models without proper guidance. We saw hoards of them leaving which left those behind in the wake of more responsibilities like covering classes, taking on a sixth class to cover a shortage, stepping into leadership roles as a new teacher, having larger class sizes and workloads. Teachers who taught during the pandemic kept a sense of normalcy for the students by giving them constant support and encouragement, by offering grace and understanding despite the lack of those gestures from the general public and often to the detriment of their own well being. Educators need to be fairly compensated for those enormous burdens they carried during the academic years of 2019, 2020 and 2021. Teachers were on the frontlines of the pandemic then without proper PPE, were not offered first doses

of the vaccine- even though our jobs mandated proximity to potential COVID daily and often had to balance teaching children that were not their own as well as those they had within their own homes. As you make your decisions on this bill, you need to consider the future of not only all children, but if all educators. Imagine this, your own child becomes a teacher; would you be satisfied with their working conditions? Would you be satisfied if your child became a teacher and was physically harmed all while trying to teach others, sacrificing their body to defend another innocent child? We have seen evidence in our own state of the selflessness of teachers and we want to know- who will stand up for us? Please let it be you, we need your vote to protect us and keep us in this profession we love so much.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

